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ABSTRACT

The paper reports on a survey of 800 members of parent, teacher, and administrator organizations to identify present practices regarding the integration of exceptional students in Ontario public schools. Responses were received from 415 individuals. The questionnaire seeks data about the effects of the Education Amendment Act, 1980, which mandated that all exceptional students have access to free and appropriate special education programs. The trend toward increased integration is examined and principles of successful integration, such as class size small enough to allow for individualized programs, are identified. Analysis of survey results indicated a range of integration practices currently being used in Ontario. Seventy-two percent of elementary teachers and 67% of secondary teachers reported having between one and four identified exceptional students in their classrooms. Most administrators indicated that a full spectrum of facilitative services are in place, including consultants and resource personnel, special material and equipment, non-teaching assistants, and inservice programs for teachers. Teachers and parents were less confident about the availability of these services or of the careful selection of students for regular class placement and preparation of the regular class teacher. Teachers and administrators also differed on the availability of inservice programs. All respondent groups agreed that class size remains a problem. The questionnaire is attached. Contains 18 references. (DB)

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Research Findings On The Integration Of Exceptional Students In Ontario Schools

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Running Head: INTEGRATION IN ONTARIO

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Overview

This study establishes the main parameters of practices for integrating exceptional students into the regular classrooms of Ontario schools. If the specific needs, views and attitudes can be identified for all the groups involved in the education process, then inter-group discrepancies may be identified for practice implications.

The enactments of The Education Amendment Act, 1980, (known as Bill 82) in Ontario and Public Law 94-142 The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 in the United States have had a profound impact on the policies and practices of educating handicapped children both in Ontario and the United States. Each law mandated that all exceptional students have access to free and appropriate special education programs and services based on the students' assessed needs and abilities. In both the United States and Ontario, the practice of integrating the exceptional student into the mainstream is the most frequent placement for students with exceptionalities (McMurray, 1970; Keeton-Wilson, 1983; Keeton-Wilson et al., 1984; Hardy & Cook, 1984).

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The philosophical foundations of the concept of integration are not new. The Hall-Dennis Report (1968), the CELDIC Report: One Million Children (Lazure & Roberts, 1970) and The Standards for Educators of Exceptional Children in Canada (SEECC) Report (Hardy, 1971) all suggested integration as a placement for exceptional children.

Integration is not a radical departure from existing practices. In an article discussing the views and policies of teachers on the subject of integration, Csapo (1981) said that even in 1975/76, the Ontario Ministry of Education reported that 62% of all children were integrated but not necessarily receiving special education services.

Currently, the movement has changed direction and the special educators, who were once the proponents of special segregated programs, are now advocating more integration and less segregation. In addition, as Canadian ideological values continue to evolve, educators must now contend with the implications of the entrenchment of human rights in the constitution. The litiginous potential of education processes requires careful study and interpretation. The yet to be tested

dynamics of special education may be shaped to some extent by interest group pressure.

According to Howarth (1981), some of the reasons for the increased pressure toward integration include:

1. Increased pressure from parents and parent advocacy groups;
2. Ontario's policy of providing programs to meet the individual needs of students; and
3. The costs of establishing separate facilities and programs which have propelled governments and school boards to consider mixing both regular and special education students.

Examples of findings from Howarth's study include the following:

1. No educator or parent should assume that every child will benefit from being mainstreamed;
2. A continuum of services for exceptional students is desirable and should be available to all;
3. Most regular classes are too large for effective individualized programs;
4. Peer tutoring has been found to be effective if children can tutor someone younger and of the

same sex;

5. Children with mild handicaps and within one chronological year of the rest of the class stand the best chance of success when mainstreamed;
6. Teachers are not against mainstreaming but they feel they have been inadequately trained to deal with many exceptionalities;
7. In general, the more serious the handicap, the more negative the teacher's attitude toward mainstreaming;
8. Teachers feel a strong need for more in-service training which includes direct experience with exceptional children.

In summary, it would appear that successful implementation of integration is based on teachers, parents, children and administration who are well-prepared; class size that is small enough to allow for individualized programs; and the provision of support services for both teachers and children.

Teachers' federations developed policies which specified conditions under which integration could be accepted as a workable administrative arrangement in

the schools. Examples of policy recommendations include smaller class sizes, support services (including material and resource personnel), quality in-service programs for teachers, administrative commitment and adequate funding.

Desharnais (1980), comments that changes are made without adequate planning and thought. He suggests that some of the main issues in the implementation of integration policies include:

1. The recognition that the relationship between regular and special education needs to be redefined;
2. The recognition that the fundamental purposes of special eduation should be the same as for regular education;
3. The organization and administration of special education should be linked with regular education in order to increase the capability of the total system to be more flexible;
4. The need for all teachers to be trained in both regular and special eduaation; and
5. The recognition that curriculum reform in itself is not the answer. Curriculum must be

implemented by knowledgeable and commited teachers.

Greasham (1982) asserted that research has shown that mainstreaming is based on three faulty assumptions:

1. That placement of handicapped children will result in increased social interaction between the handicapped and non-handicapped;
2. That placement in regular classrooms will result in social acceptance; and
3. That mainstreamed handicapped children will model the behaviour of their non-handicapped peers because of the increased exposure to them.

Although Greashan warns against mainstreaming based on the foregoing faulty assumptions, he asserts that social skills can be taught to exceptional students. However, successful implementation of a social skills training program requires the commitment of time by other regular and special education teachers and ongoing planning and consultation.

Teacher Considerations

The role of the classroom teacher continues to be an extremely important one. Kopit (1982) wrote that teacher attitudes determine the extent of success of mainstreamed special education programs. Blankenship & Lilly (1977) have said that orientation toward integration necessitates a very different sort of teacher preparation (p. 28). If Bill 82 and Public Law 94-142 are considered to be innovative pieces of legislation then, according to Postman & Weingartner (1963), "adaptation to innovation is affected by teacher attitudes, beliefs, feelings and assumptions" (p. 26).

Negative attitudes of teachers toward mainstreaming/ integration appear to be the result of inadequacies in both pre-service and in-service training, as well as a lack of experience in working with exceptional students (Walsh, 1986). Research reported by Hummel (1982) and Stephens & Braun (1980) found that those classroom teachers who had supported the concept of integration had previous in-service experiences.

Hudson, Reisberg & Wolf (1983) also found the "perceptions about mainstreaming held by regular classroom teachers can be changed through a structured course or inservice presentation" (p.22). Hummel, Dworet & Walsh (1985) report simliar findings in Ontario: the more training and experience, the more comfortable the teacher became and the more positive the results. It appears that teacher confidence results from the combination of cognitive knowledge and experience.

Data Collection and Analysis

In total, 800 questionnaires (See Figure 1) were distributed to the parent, teacher and administrator sample groups. (see Figure 2) Post cards were mailed two weeks after the questionnaires were mailed, as a reminder to respondents to return the questionnaires. The return rate was approximately 50% percent for a total of 415 (parents = 106, teachers = 175, administrators = 134).

Data were analyzed for description and comparison to establish the parameters of practice of integrating

exceptional students into the regular classrooms of Ontario, so that specific needs, views and attitudes could be identified for all the groups involved in the education process! (see Tables 1, 2 & 3)

Sixteen questions which were part of the larger survey were relevant to the focus of this study. Mean response scores for all groups on these questions (Appendix A) were calculated as a way of determining overall attituded for each group. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was done on the mean scores to determine similarities or differences in overall responses for the three groups.

Parameters of practice were determined by using the same summary and analytical procedures, i.e., mean scores and one-way NOVA, on questions # 17 through # 33 (Appendix A). The same procedure used to calculate mean scores and ANOVA, was used on questions #30 through #44 (Appendix A).

Findings

Questions (# 17 - 29) dealt with the respondents' views of the integration practices in effect in their

jurisdictions at this time.

Although the three groups' responses to individual questions were a mixture of agreement and disagreement, no statistical differences in agreement were observed for the following statements:

1. That time is made available only sometimes to the regular classroom teacher for consultation with parents, resource personnel and colleagues (# 22);
2. That regular classroom teachers are sometimes members of the Identification Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) when their exceptional students are referred (# 24).

All three groups indicated that school buildings are accesssible to physically exceptional students (# 29), with administrators agreeing the most ($p.<.05$).

From the data, it appears that administrators perceive that integration practices are happening in the schools more frequently than do parents and teachers. In other words, there is a statistical difference ($p.<.001$) between how administrators perceive integration practices as happening in the

schools and how teachers and parents view these as happening. Administrators indicated that the following practices are happening more frequently than did teachers and parents (p.<.001)t

1. There is a careful selection of exceptional students for placement in regular classrooms (# 17),
2. Carefully planned preparations are made with the regular classroom teacher before placement of exceptional students in the regular classrooms (# 18),
3. Special materials and equipment are readily available to the regular classroom teacher (# 19),
4. Special education in-service training is available to regular classroom teachers on a regularly scheduled basis (# 21),
5. Support services (consultants, resource personnel) are readily available to assist the regular classroom teacher (# 23),
6. In-school teams meet regularly to plan for exceptional students who have been integrated into regular classrooms (# 25),

7. Non-teaching assistants are available to help the exceptional student with academic tasks (# 27), and
8. Non-teaching personnnel are available to look after the physical needs of the integrated exceptional child (# 28).

On the issue of the reduction of class size when an exceptional student is placed in a regular class (# 20), the data show, at the $p.<.001$ level of significance, that both parents and teachers indicated that the number of students in the class is almost never reduced. Administrators indicated that class size was reduced sometimes.

The mean score for each group clusters around "undecided" on the issue of the availability of in-service training for regular class teachers (# 21). However, administrators tended to indicate that in-service is available, whereas teachers and parents indicated that in-service training is "almost never" available on regularly scheduled basis.

Finally, on whether or not there is a full range of placement options available for exceptional students within their own jurisdictions (# 26), the data

indicate there are differences of perception. Administrators appeared to feel that the full range of options is almost always available. Parents indicated that the full range of options is available sometimes and teachers indicated that the full range of options is almost never available.

Summary and Conclusions

The central question in this study was to ascertain the present practices regarding the integration of exceptional students. From the results of the survey, it appears that there is a range of integration practices in place in Ontario at the present time. There continue to be exceptional students who are placed in regular classrooms and who are receiving special education programs and services. The majority of teachers (63%) who responded to the questionnaire were regular classroom teachers. Of the elementary teachers responding, 72% reported having between one and four identified exceptional students in their classrooms. Of the secondary teachers who responded, 67% reported that there were between one and four

identified exceptional students in their classrooms.

The results of this study show that administrators indicated that a full spectrum of facilitative services for the successful integration of exceptional students is already in place within their own jurisdictions. They reported the ready availability of the following support services:

1. consultants and resource personnel,
2. special material and equipment
3. non-teaching assistants, and
4. in-service programs for teachers.

Teachers and parents, on the other hand, have different perceptions about the availability of these services as indicated by the significant differences in their responses to the survey questions.

Administrators also reported that there always was a careful selection of exceptional students for placement in regular classrooms and that carefully planned preparations with the regular classroom teacher were made prior to the placement of exceptional students. Parents and teachers were not equally convinced about the regularity of these two practices as indicated by the significant differences in their responses to the

survey questions.

On the question of the availability of in-service programs for regular classroom teachers on a regularly scheduled basis, administrators again thought differently than did parents and teachers. Administrators perceived that in-service programs for regular classroom teachers were taking place on a regularly scheduled basis. Teachers perceived that this was not the case.

The results on the class size issue show that both parents and teachers reported that there are too many students in the regular classes to allow for successful integration of exceptional students and individualized programming. Administrators agreed that class size is not usually reduced when exceptional students are placed in regular classrooms.

Thus we can report that, at the end of 1987, administrators in the schools of Ontario perceived that integration practices were more firmly entrenched than did the teachers and parents of the province.

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Figure 1.

Questionnaire

Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

(A) Strongly Agree; (B) Agree; (C) Undecided;
(D) Disagree; (E) Disagree Strongly.

1. Integration provides access to equal educational opportunities for the exceptional and non-exceptional alike.
2. Education is strengthened by combining the strengths of general and special eduation.
3. If special education support is given, the regular classroom teacher can learn to educate exceptional students.
4. It is preferable to educate an exceptional student with exceptional peers.
5. Exceptional students should be placed in their neighbourhood schools.
6. Exceptional students should always be placed in a regular educational classroom.
7. Exceptional students should be placed with their chronological age peers.
8. Students with mildly handicapping conditions should be placed in a regular classroom setting.
9. Students with severely handicapping conditions should not be placed in a regular classroom setting.
10. School Boards should retain special self-contained classes for exceptional students with severe problems.
12. Special self-contained class programs should be situated within regular schools.
13. There continues to be a need for highly specialized special schools for students with severe problems.
14. School Boards should maintain a full range of placement options for exceptional students.
15. Non-exceptional students are being deprived if they are not allowed to associate with their exceptional peers in the regular classroom environments.
16. Integration means that every exceptional student should be placed in the regular classroom on a full-time basis.

Please indicate the degree to which you feel these integration practices are happening in your School Board:

(A) Always; (B) Almost Always; (C) Sometimes;
(D) Almost Never; (E) Never.

17. There is a careful selection of exceptional students for placement in regular classrooms.
18. Before placement in a regular program, carefully planned preparations are made with the regular classroom teacher.
19. Special materials and equipment are readily available to the regular classroom teacher.
20. When an exceptional student is placed in a regular class, the number of students in the class is reduced.
21. Special education in-service training is available to regular classroom teachers on a regularly scheduled basis.
22. Time is made available to the regular classroom teacher for consultation with parents, resource personnel and colleagues.
23. Support services (consultants, resource personnel) are readily available to assist the regular classroom teachers.
24. Regular classroom teachers are members of the IPRC when their exceptional students are referred to it.
25. In-school teams meet regularly to plan for exceptional students who have been integrated into regular classrooms.
26. There is a full range of placement options for exceptional students within your school board.
27. Non-teaching assistants are available to help the exceptional student with academic tasks.
28. Non-teaching personnel is available to look after the physical needs of the integrated exceptional child.
29. School buildings are accessible to physically exceptional students.

Indicate which of the following practices you feel would beneficially develop integration in your School Board.

(A) Most needed; (B) More needed; (C) Needed;
(D) Less needed; (E) Least needed.

30. Regularly scheduled special education in-service for the entire school staff.
31. Special material and equipment for the regular classroom teacher.
32. Reduction of regular class size when exceptional children are integrated.
33. In-service training for regular class teachers on a planned schedule.
34. In-service training for resource withdrawal teachers on a planned schedule.
35. Time within school hours for the regular classroom teacher to consult with parents, resource personnel and colleagues.
36. Additional support services for the classroom teacher (consultants, resource teachers, etc.).
37. Regular classroom teachers are members of the IPRC when their exceptional students are referred to it.
38. Regular meetings of in-school teams to plan for exceptional students who have been integrated.
39. A full range of placement options for exceptional students (resource support, special classes and special schools).
40. Teacher assistants needed to help with exceptional students.
41. Non-teaching personnel to assist with non-instructional needs of exceptional students (toileting, lifting, etc.).
42. Time within school hours for teachers to prepare parents of regular students for the arrival of exceptional students.
43. Time within school hours for teachers to prepare students for the arrival of exceptional students.
44. Time within school hours for teachers to prepare exceptional students for integration into the regular classroom.

Figure 2.

Participating Groups

List of Participating Groups:

Ontario Teachers Federation

Ontario Association of Education Administrative Officials

Ontario Council of Administrators in Special Education

Ontario School Trustees Council

Ontario Catholic Supervisory Officers Association

Association des Surintendants/Surintendantes Franco-Ontariens

Ontario Parent-Teacher Association

Association for Bright Children

Ontario Association for Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities

Ontario Association for the Mentally Retarded

Ontario Advisory Council for the Physically Handicapped

Table 1
Needs for Integration

ANOVA Results for Each Question Across the Three Groups

Question	F-Ratio	Significance Level
1.	3.0565	*
2.	8.5899	***
3.	10.3419	***
4.	11.4640	***
5.	3.0044	*
6.	1.8408	nsd
7.	8.4899	***
8.	2.8825	*
9.	4.5501	***
10.	3.1411	*
11.	2.4256	*
12.	2.2775	nsd
13.	3.2348	**
14.	1.5275	nsd
15.	2.9725	*
16.	3.6881	**

Table 2

Views of Integration

ANOVA Results for Each Question Across the Three Groups

Question	F-Ratio	Significance Level
17.	26.7270	***
18.	12.4803	***
19.	9.8952	***
20.	8.2389	***
21.	5.2363	***
22.	.9406	nsd
23.	20.1312	***
24.	1.0283	nsd
25.	15.9356	***
26.	21.9977	***
27.	8.7838	***
28.	7.5529	***
29.	2.4306	*

* = p.<.05
** = p.<01
*** = p.<001
nsd = no significant difference

Table 3

Attitudes Toward Integration

ANOVA Results for Each Question Across the Three Groups

Question	F-Ratio	Significance Level
30.	4.8124	***
31.	4.7487	***
32.	7.5034	***
33.	4.0958	***
34.	4.0829	***
35.	1.8635	nsd
36.	10.0338	***
37.	4.4271	***
38.	3.8631	***
39.	6.7713	***
40.	9.4517	***
41.	1.0953	nsd
42.	5.3174	***
43.	3.1708	**
44.	3.0937	*